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ABSTRACT

This report reviews the concept and means of assessing progress toward meeting Goal 5 of the National Goals Panel which aims at universal adult literacy and knowledge and skills needed to compete in the global economy and exercise citizenship. The goal's specific objectives focus on the relationship between work and education and outcomes, increased enrollment (especially of minorities) in postsecondary education, and outcomes of postsecondary education. The report identifies significant issues to be addressed and coordinated nationally if a national strategy for assessing the results of postsecondary education is to develop. Six critical issues relating to achieving the national goal are identified: (1) defining assessment purposes, (2) defining skill levels and types, (3) providing inventory and coordination, (4) assigning responsibility for assessment, (5) developing systems, and (6) assessing progress toward the goal. Recommendations include: adoption of a uniform reporting format for reporting degree completion rates (a specific format is suggested); development of a sample-based national system of standards and assessment for postsecondary education; development of content and performance standards for general cognitive skills, higher order thinking skills, and occupational skills; and creation of a separate coordinating council for postsecondary standards and assessment. Included are two attachments, a table form for persistence and graduation rates and an inventory of assessment activities. (JB)

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ED 341897

NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS PANEL

THE TASK FORCE ON ASSESSING THE NATIONAL GOAL RELATING TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Report to the National Education Goals Panel

July 31, 1992

HE 025 818

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Report of the Task Force on
Assessing the National Goal Relating to Postsecondary Education

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NATIONAL EDUCATION GOAL 5

Goal 5: **By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.**

Objectives:

- Every major American business will be involved in strengthening the connection between education and work.
- All workers will have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills, from basic to highly technical, need to adapt to emerging new technologies, work methods, and markets through public and private educational, vocational, technical, workplace, or other programs.
- The number of high-quality programs, including those at libraries, that are designed to serve more effectively the needs of the growing number of part-time and mid-career students will increase substantially.
- The proportion of those qualified students (especially minorities) who enter college, who complete at least two years, and who complete their degree program will increase substantially.
- The proportion of college graduates who demonstrate an advanced ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems will increase substantially.

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON ASSESSING THE NATIONAL GOAL RELATING TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

I. Introduction

In February 1992, the National Goals Panel convened a Task Force on Assessing the National Goal Relating to Postsecondary Education. This report reflects the Task Force's advice to the National Education Goals Panel on its charge, which was to investigate and report on:

- the feasibility, desirability and schedule for developing standardized comparable state reports on the rate at which students entering higher education institutions complete their degree programs and by minority student status; and
- the feasibility and desirability of a sample-based collegiate assessment which would provide regular national and state representative indicators of college graduates' ability to think critically, communicate effectively and solve problems.

Fortunately, interest in the assessment of postsecondary education does not begin with the attention given it by the Goals Panel. There has been increasing interest in postsecondary assessment over the past five years both at the state and institutional levels. Many state institutions, accrediting bodies and professional associations currently are engaged in some form of assessment activity. Further, the Goals Panel has considerable experience with the assessment of progress on the national goals at the elementary-secondary level.

This report reviews both the concept and the means of assessing progress toward meeting Goal 5 as it applies to all of postsecondary education, not just the collegiate sector. It identifies a number of significant issues that must be addressed and coordinated nationally if a national strategy for assessing the results of postsecondary education is to develop.

II. Objective: **The proportion of those qualified students (especially minorities) who enter college, who complete at least two years, and who complete their degree programs will increase substantially.**

The Task Force believes that it is both feasible and desirable to develop a system of standardized comparable state reports on the rate at which students entering higher education institutions complete their degree programs and by minority status. This makes sense primarily because consumers of postsecondary education, including students, employers and funders, need to know how likely it is that students entering an institution will ultimately

meet their educational objectives including completion of a program. Retention and graduation rates, reflected accurately and comparably, provide useful indicators of institutional performance that can prompt more detailed analysis to identify the causes and implications of these simple descriptive statistics.

Assuring accurate and comparable measures of retention and graduation rates, however, is difficult. A valid measure should include the full universe of institutions, including public, private, and not-for-profit institutions; should have mutually agreed upon persistence indicators (e.g., percent maintaining "normal" progress); several meaningful degree completion statistics (credit and programs completed as well as aggregate graduation rates); and contextual indicators that provide additional information to aid in interpreting and understanding student performance statistics, such as the type of program and the proportion of part-time, full-time and continuously enrolled students.

Fortunately, the task of analyzing and reporting retention and graduation rates in postsecondary education is an area where substantial progress is being made. A number of states have begun developing composite statistics on persistence and graduation rates. While these disparate state efforts do not yet provide the level of interstate comparability necessary for a national system, they do serve as indicators of the state interest in such statistics. They also provide a starting point for developing uniformity in this process at the state level, where such information can be applied to policy and management decisions.

In addition, the federal government, through two instruments -- the Student Right-To-Know Act and the National Postsecondary Transcript Studies (NPTS) -- has highlighted the importance of developing reliable information about the retention and graduation rates of students. The work of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in developing common definitions for implementation of the Student Right-To-Know Act should be dovetailed with state efforts to develop composite comparative statistics on persistence and completion.

The National Education Goals Panel and others interested in developing accurate and comparable national statistics on retention and completion rates should understand that the initial efforts by states and the federal government to provide these statistics will not fully measure up to our long-term quality standard objective. It will take some time to assure comparable definitions and to begin measuring the full range of information needed. For example, while initially data may be available in many states only for public institutions, the long-term goal must be to include all institutions in a reporting system. Ideally, this system must be electronic based in order to track students who transfer from one institution to another.

Furthermore, statistics for part-time students can be misleading if there is no distinction between those who are seeking a degree and those whose educational objective is

simply to take a course or two. Therefore, initial statistics, which do not distinguish between degree seeking students and others, could seriously underestimate the "success" of community colleges and urban universities that serve many non-degree seeking students. Yet the limits of these first generation data collection efforts cannot be used as an excuse for not moving forward. Recognizing the difficulties that will be encountered in reaching agreement on definitions and procedures, there is an emerging agreement that graduation and program completion rates are a legitimate public concern and should be reported.

The Task Force therefore **concludes**:

- **A systematic and coordinated effort at the federal level should be developed to report degree completion rates.**

To further this agenda, the Task Force has developed a structure and set of definitions for state-based reporting which draws on the efforts of those states with tracking systems already in place (Attachment 1). To move toward a national system for measuring persistence and graduation rates, the Task Force **recommends that**:

(1) The Goals Panel encourage the federal government to adopt a uniform reporting format for reporting degree completion rates (see Attachment 1 for suggested format).

(2) The Goals Panel encourage other states to adopt this reporting format.

(3) The Goals Panel encourage all states to move as rapidly as possible to include all institutions, public and private, into the reporting system.

III. Objective: The proportion of college graduates who demonstrate an advanced ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems will increase substantially.

Policy makers at the state and federal level, as well as regular citizens, both deserve and need to know how well our nation's postsecondary education system works -- do students learn what they need to know to be effective citizens and productive workers?

No systematic way now exists to measure what our postsecondary students know based either on identified standards of performance or a comparative basis. Existing informal evaluations are often based on institutional reputations and public relations efforts. Without a systematic way to gauge postsecondary education's effectiveness, the result has been public confusion. Educators claim great success in serving an increasingly diverse student body, while others, including many state and federal policy makers and an increasing number of

vocal business leaders, decry the lack of preparedness of postsecondary graduates. Developing a national assessment system for postsecondary education will inform opinions about its success, just as the efforts to develop standards and assessment for elementary and secondary education will inform opinions about the success of that sector of education. A national assessment based on world-class standards, by clarifying the nation's expectations, will almost certainly help to raise standards and expectations of students, especially in our weakest institutions.

This said, the Task Force does not underestimate the difficulty of developing a valid national assessment system because we still lack many of its most critical elements. We need validated ways of assessing critical thinking skills, communication and problem solving skills, as well as a national occupational skills certification system. Developing these systems will be costly and time consuming. Because postsecondary education's goals are so diverse, it will be difficult to gain consensus on the specific objectives of a college degree. Because a national evaluation system may be perceived as fostering a national curriculum, many who value the diversity of the American postsecondary system of education will challenge a move in this direction. Nevertheless, our need to demonstrate to our many publics the effectiveness of postsecondary education and our need to maintain an internationally competitive postsecondary system requires us to move toward a more deliberate assessment of effectiveness.

The Task Force **concludes:**

- **It is both feasible and desirable to develop a national sample-based postsecondary assessment system, which will provide regular national and state representative indicators of college graduates' ability to think critically, communicate effectively and solve problems and which includes assessments of occupational specific skills for students in occupationally specific programs.**

Having reached this conclusion, the Task Force identified six general issue areas which are critical to the success of this assessment effort. These issues are addressed below.

Critical Issues

1. Defining the Purpose of Assessment

In general, assessment can serve two purposes: it can provide public awareness and accountability about performance, or it can provide institutions with information about how well they are performing compared to a national or other standard. While these objectives are not necessarily incompatible, neither are the ways in which they may be accomplished

necessarily the same. It is important, therefore, to distinguish which purpose is most important to achieve Goal 5.

The Task Force **concludes**:

- **The purpose of developing a national collegiate assessment system is, first and foremost, to monitor the nation's progress toward Goal 5.**

Clearly, a national effort to serve this purpose will focus most directly on the objective of assuring public awareness and accountability, rather than on the objective of stimulating reform via individually tailored institutional assessments. Further, a national system of assessment would recognize the ongoing autonomous pursuit of the unique missions of individual institutions.

By concluding that monitoring the nation's progress toward a National Education Goal is the primary goal, we do not underestimate the importance of current postsecondary institutions' efforts to improve individual institutional performance. Individual institutional efforts remain critically important, but serve a different purpose than what the Goals Panel is seeking to accomplish.

It is within this context that the Task Force **recommends**:

(4) **The Goals Panel encourage the development of a sample-based national system of standards and assessment for postsecondary education.**

Such a system would provide reliable evidence of how well the nation's postsecondary system is doing in achieving established standards, but would not produce reportable scores by institution. The system should be designed, however, to allow individual states and institutions to produce their own scores if they wish to gauge their own progress toward a national standard.

2. Defining Types and Levels of Skills for Postsecondary Graduates

Because no consensus exists today on what skills should be expected of college and vocational postsecondary graduates, one of the first tasks in developing a national assessment system must be to develop agreed upon standards of performance for postsecondary graduates, with a second task being to develop instruments and procedures to measure achievement of these standards. Specific strategies for developing national standards and assessment activities are identified in subsequent sections of this report.

National content and performance standards must be developed for postsecondary graduates as well as instruments that measure achievement of these standards. The Task Force **recommends**:

(5) **The Goals Panel suggest that content and performance standards be developed for general cognitive skills, higher order thinking skills, and occupational specific skills where appropriate.**

The instruments and procedures developed to measure attainment of these skills must recognize that skill competencies vary for different individuals, and thus measurement tools must be able to distinguish among the continuum of demonstrated skill levels above and below the standard. Operationally defined performance levels that bound the national standard should also be identified.

3. Need for Inventory and Coordination

While the assessment activities underway by states and the federal government are useful and will contribute to our ability to assess progress toward Goal 5, the Task Force **recommends**:

(6) **The Goals Panel insist that in order to maximize their usefulness, assessment efforts be better coordinated though a formal structure outlined in recommendation 8.**

Without coordination of efforts, separate assessment activities will become increasingly isolated and rigid and will contribute little to an overall, national assessment system. To this end, efforts of the National Governors' Association, the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the National Education Goals Panel, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Labor, and the Congress should all be coordinated into a single national collaborative effort.

The Task Force made a preliminary effort to inventory current assessment activities (see Attachment 2). Such an inventory should be extended to include all state level efforts. Further, the current work of NCES to examine the usefulness of existing national assessment efforts should serve as a starting point for gaining an understanding of standards and assessment for postsecondary education. In addition, the efforts of the Department of Education and Department of Labor to develop a national skills certification process should

be more effectively coordinated and should be incorporated into the scope of the overall postsecondary standards and assessment activity. The Task Force **recommends** that:

(7) **The Goals Panel urge the U.S. Secretaries of Education and Labor approve funding for assessment and skills certification activities only if the activity is coordinated and recorded in the inventory of assessment activities (Attachment 2) to be maintained by the Goals Panel staff.**

4. Assigning Responsibility for Assessment: Federal, National or State?

The initial response to the Task Force Inventory shows clearly that there is much assessment activity underway or planned at many levels -- institutional, state, private and federal. However, it is questionable whether this can be sustained or that coherence can be achieved without a stronger national or federal role. "National" implies a national perspective, i.e., the National Education Goals Panel. "Federal" implies an agency of the federal government playing a key coordinating role. Obviously, a combination of federal and national is feasible. The Task Force **concludes**:

(4) **A national system has distinct advantages over a federal system because it requires a stronger partnership between the states and the federal government.**

A national system will not evolve on its own. A concerted effort is required to create it. The Task Force believes that the Goals Panel should provide the leadership for the development of such a national effort. The Task Force believes that the recommendations presented in the January 24, 1992 report of the National Council on Education Standards and Testing (NCEST) entitled Raising Standards for American Education, are equally salient for postsecondary education. That body recommended a council that would work toward national achievement standards and the certification of instruments that measure against those standards.

To provide the necessary leadership and discipline to accomplish this task, the Task Force **recommends**:

(8) **The Goals Panel recommend the creation of a separate coordinating council for postsecondary standards and assessment that parallels that recommended by the National Council on Education Standards and Testing for elementary-secondary education and recommend financial support from the Congress to support this activity.**

A separate activity is needed to assure that a disciplined effort, focused solely on postsecondary education, is made. However, a steering committee should be established to

assure appropriate linkages between the NCEST recommended council and the one proposed here.

5. Development of Assessment Systems: A Public or Private Responsibility?

Initial response to our inventory of assessment activities shows that both private and public institutions are engaged in assessment efforts. However, most of the effort is in response to a public initiative either from the national or the state level. Therefore, the Task Forces **concludes**:

- **While the actual development of assessment efforts may be private, public, or a partnership of public and private entities, the development of national standards is principally a public responsibility and should be initiated and sustained as a public activity.**

Assuring coherence in coordination of assessment efforts and adherence to the highest professional standards of test development require a leading public role. Furthermore, the critical funds for development and maintenance are likely in the final analysis to come directly or indirectly from public sources. Therefore, voluntary or private initiatives are not likely to result in a national system of assessment or developing national standards for postsecondary education.

6. Assessing Progress on Goal 5: A Comprehensive System or Fragmentation?

The Task Force considered whether the overall objectives of the Goals Panel will best be served by the development of a comprehensive, integrated and complementary system of assessment as contrasted to discrete and selective assessments of single dimensions of postsecondary performance.

For example, three types and levels of skills may be identified as necessary to meet Goal 5 for the adult American population. First are basic skills which are required to be effective in the work place and the learning place. Second are occupational skills required to be effective in a particular job or profession. A third set of skills might be described as higher order skills of the type generally thought to be addressed in objective 5 of Goal 5. Currently, assessment development activity addresses these skills separately without thought for eventual integration into a system of assessment of the performance of our postsecondary system. The result is likely to be a fragmentation of assessments which do not provide a comprehensive view of how the system is performing. Further, it is likely that false dichotomies of skills will emerge which divide the efforts of our postsecondary systems both at the national and state level. The natural implication is to place higher value on some category of skills over another. Indeed, our system of postsecondary opportunities currently exhibits this fragmentation. In fact, our nation will be best served by the development of a

community of skills, mutually dependent and supportive of individuals' ability to pursue their learning potential to the fullest.

The Task Force **concludes**:

- **The Goals Panel and the nation will be best served by the general integration of skill types into a comprehensive system of assessment.**

The Task Force **recommends**:

(9) **The Goals Panel establish as an objective the development of a constellation of indicators of postsecondary performance which includes basic skill levels, occupational skill levels and higher order skills.**

Such a constellation will best reflect the diversity of institutions in the nation and will also better reflect the diverse needs of the American adult population. Such an approach would recognize skill levels before and after two years of higher education as well as four years of college. Within levels, it would allow distinction between adequacy, inadequacy, and distinction. It would provide a national profile of postsecondary skill attainment and allow individual states to develop profiles of adult skill levels which display the skill attainment levels of a population.

IV. Summary

In summary, the Task Force concludes its report with specific conclusions and recommendations in response to the charge given it by the Goals Panel.

With regard to the feasibility, desirability and schedule for developing standardized comparable state reports on the rate at which students entering higher education institutions complete their degree programs and by minority status, the Task Force **concludes** that:

- **A systematic and coordinated effort at the federal level should be developed to report degree completion rates.**

The Task Force **recommends** that:

(1) **The Goals Panel encourage the federal government to adopt a uniform reporting format for reporting degree completion rates (see Attachment 1 for suggested format).**

(2) **The Goals Panel encourage other states to adopt this reporting format.**

(3) **The Goals Panel encourage all states to move as rapidly as possible to include all institutions, public and private, into the reporting system.**

With regard to the feasibility and desirability of a sample-based collegiate assessment which would provide regular national and state indicators of college graduates' ability to think critically, communicate effectively and solve problems, the Task Force **concludes** that:

- **It is both feasible and desirable to develop a national sample-based postsecondary assessment system, which will provide regular national and state representative indicators of college graduates' ability to think critically, communicate effectively and solve problems and which includes assessments of occupational specific skills for students in occupationally specific programs.**

- **The purpose of developing a national collegiate assessment system is, first and foremost, to monitor the nation's progress toward Goal 5.**

The Task Force **recommends** that:

(4) **The Goals Panel encourage the development of a sample-based national system of standards and assessment for postsecondary education.**

(5) **The Goals Panel suggest that content and performance standards be developed for general cognitive skills, higher order thinking skills, and occupational specific skills where appropriate.**

(6) **The Goals Panel insist that in order to maximize their usefulness, assessment efforts be better coordinated though a formal structure outlined in recommendation 8.**

(7) **The Goals Panel urge the U.S. Secretaries of Education and Labor approve funding for assessment and skills certification activities only if the activity is coordinated and recorded in the inventory of assessment activities (Attachment 2) to be maintained by the Goals Panel staff.**

The Task Force **concludes** that:

- **A national system has distinct advantages over a federal system because it requires a stronger partnership between the states and the federal government.**

The Task Force **recommends** that:

(8) **The Goals Panel recommend the creation of a separate coordinating council for postsecondary standards and assessment that parallels that recommended by the National Council on Education Standards and Testing for elementary-secondary education and recommend financial support from the Congress to support this activity.**

The Task Forces **concludes** that:

- **While the actual development of assessment efforts may be private, public, or a partnership of public and private entities, the development of national standards is principally a public responsibility and should be initiated and sustained as a public activity.**

- **The Goals Panel and the nation will be best served by the general integration of skill types into a comprehensive system of assessment.**

The Task Force **recommends** that:

(9) **The Goals Panel establish as an objective the development of a constellation of indicators of postsecondary performance which includes basic skill levels, occupational skill levels and higher order skills.**

In conclusion, the Task Force recognizes that the development of national standards and assessment measures for American postsecondary education is a long-term effort requiring much consensus building, assessment development and testing. It concludes, however, that the nation's future well-being depends upon the establishment of standards for learning which will raise educational achievement levels sufficient to insure that the United States' citizens are competitive with their counterparts throughout the world. The development of national standards of performance and assessment requires national leadership and federal support.

ATTACHMENT 1

Persistence and Graduation Rates in Higher Education*

* The Task Force is indebted to Charles Lenth, Director of SHEEO/NCES Communication Network, of the State of Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) for staff assistance on this report format. Mr. Lenth's assistance does not represent endorsement by SHEEO of the Task Force's report.

Table for the National Education Goals Report
Persistence and Graduation Rates in Higher Education
Academic Year 19___, Based on Entering Class of Fall 1993

Note: Columns 1 through 5 indicate the sectors and students indicated in the state "composite" figures.
1 -- Full-time students at public 4-year institutions
2 -- Part-time students at public 4-year institutions
3 -- Full-time students at public 2-year institutions
4 -- Part-time students at public 2-year institutions
5 -- Other _____

State	Sectors and Students Included 1	2	3	4	5	Entering Class Fall 1993	Enrolled Fall 1994 (%)	Completed Associate Degree or Certificate by June 1997 (%)	Completed Baccalaureate Degree by June 2000 (%)
Alabama									
Alaska									
Arkansas									
.									
.									
.									
.									
.									
.									
.									
.									
Wisconsin									
Wyoming									

ATTACHMENT 2

Inventory of Assessment Activities Relating to
Postsecondary Education*

* The Task Force on Assessing the National Goal Relating to Postsecondary Education developed and circulated a request for information on assessment activities underway (see attached survey form). Responses to the survey are incomplete. However, the inventory as currently developed indicates the array of assessment activity planned or underway and the extent of funding for such efforts.

NATIONAL GOALS PANEL
INVENTORY OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES RELATING TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

PROJECT	1992-93 Budget/Tasks	1994-95 Budget/Tasks	1995-96 Budget/Tasks
NCHS PER ASSESSMENT STUDY			
Target: College Graduates Purpose: This study is concerned with the enhancement of problem solving, critical thinking, oral communication, and written communication skills in college graduates as they relate to the workplace and in the practice of citizenship. The first phase of the study will identify and define each of the skills and a means of assessing each. The secondary phase calls for developing the means of assessing these skills, in particular the instrument development and assessment approach.	$800,000 Define skills and levels of proficiency.	$2,000,000 Identification and review of initial listing of skills and levels of proficiency. Identification of alternative approaches to the assessment. Publication of revised listing of skills and attributes.	$2,400,000 FY95 $6,000,000 FY96 $2,000,000 FY97 Develop the assessment instrumentation Field test Develop sampling plan and data collection strategy Collect data Analyze data Prepare report(s) Disseminate findings
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR/NCHS STUDY			
Target: K-12 Students/Adults 21-25 Purpose: This study is of the workplace readiness of high school graduates and adults in the workforce. The purpose of the first phase of the project is to develop an assessment framework and a means of measuring the set of workplace competencies identified in the SCANS report. Skills to be assessed: 1. Effective resource use 2. Effective interpersonal skills 3. Effective information collection and use 4. Effective system development and use 5. Understanding and use of technology	$1,000,000 DOL/$400,000 NCES Develop framework and select test items and pre-test.	Establish internal validity and psychometric properties SCANS competency scales.	Administer SCANS measures in 1996.
THE ACADEMIC PROFILE, ETS			
Target: College and University Students Purpose: To help institutions of higher education assess the outcomes of their	When over 1,000 tests are ordered, the cost of the Short Form is $4.50 each, and the Long Form is $8 each. Each essay booklet is $1.00. A		

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NATIONAL GOALS PANEL
INVENTORY OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES RELATING TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

PROJECT	1992-93 Budget/Tasks	1994-95 Budget/Tasks	1995-96 Budget/Tasks
general education programs by providing an assessment of college-level reading, college-level writing, critical thinking, and mathematics within the context of humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. The Academic Profile may be used to describe the performance of students at a particular college and to compare it with that of other similar institutions, as a measure of growth in learning (or "value added" by the collegiate experience), as a performance standard for "rising juniors" or for exiting seniors, and as a counseling tool. This testing program currently is used by about 150 U.S. colleges and universities. It measures the skills of college-level reading, writing, math, and critical thinking in context of materials from the academic areas of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. It consists of a Long Form (which includes 144 multiple-choice questions and requires 2.5 hours) and a Short Form (which includes 36 multiple-choice questions and requires 40 minutes). It is administered by institutions and scored within three weeks by ETS. An optional content-related essay is available. Both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced scores are produced. Three Proficiency Levels are provided as a part of the criterion-referenced scores in writing, mathematics, and reading/critical thinking. Norm-referenced scores are reported as scale scores in Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Reading, Writing, Critical Thinking, Mathematics, and Total Score. The Long Form provides a full range of both individual scores and institutional mean data. The Short Form yields a full range of group mean data but only a total score for individuals.	$250 institutional participation fee is also required.		

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NATIONAL GOALS PANEL
INVENTORY OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES RELATING TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

PROJECT	1992-93 Budget/Tasks	1994-95 Budget/Tasks	1995-96 Budget/Tasks
National comparative data are provided by class level and by type of institution (by Carnegie classification). A Self-Selected Reference Group (of at least 8 institutions) allows institutions to create their own comparative group from among other institutions using the Academic Profile.			
THE NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY SURVEY (NALS) AND THE ETS TESTS OF APPLIED LITERACY SKILLS (TALS)			
Target: Adults aged sixteen and over residing in private households across the continental U.S. Eleven states are participating in concurrent literacy assessments which will be comparable to the national assessments, although only for adults aged sixteen to sixty-four.	$2,600,000 Budgeted by the Department of Education for NALS for FY1992 $1,100,000 Requested for FY1993		
Purpose: (NALS) is a household survey that will measure the literacy skills of a nationally representative sample of adults and report to the nation on the condition of literacy in the U.S. Funding for NALS is provided by the National Center for Education Statistics. One of the major goals of NALS is to compare its results to those from other large-scale literacy assessments conducted for NCES and the Department of Labor within the recent past.			
(TALS), outgrowths of NALS and previous adult literacy assessments, have been developed by ETS and are now available to the broad population from the publisher, Simon & Schuster Workplace Resources.			
NALS results will be reported in 1993 and will: (1) describe the types and levels of literacy demonstrated by the total adult population, adults within specified age ranges, and adults comprising "at risk" subgroups; (2) characterize and help explain demonstrated literacy skills in terms of demographic and personal background			

NATIONAL GOALS PANEL
INVENTORY OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES RELATING TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

PROJECT	1992-93 Budget/Tasks	1994-95 Budget/Tasks	1995-96 Budget/Tasks
characteristics; (3) profile the Prose, Document and Quantitative literacy skills of the American workforce; (4) relate literacy skills to current labor-market indices as well as occupational categories; and (5) compare NALS results with those from the 1985 literacy assessment of young adults conducted by NAEP and with those from the recent Workplace Literacy Assessment conducted for the U.S. Department of Labor.			
GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATION			
Target: Students applying to graduate schools Purpose: The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test assesses college students' verbal, quantitative and analytical abilities for the purpose of providing a common measure for comparing the qualifications of graduate school applicants who come from a variety of colleges and universities with different standards. The GRE General Test measures certain developed verbal, quantitative, and analytical abilities that are important for academic achievement. It is designed to measure one's ability to reason with words in solving problems, which involves the ability to discern, comprehend, and analyze relationships among words or groups of words and within longer units of discourse. The quantitative section is designed to measure basic mathematical skills, understanding of elementary mathematical concepts, and ability to reason quantitatively and to solve problems in a quantitative setting. The analytical section measures analytical skills developed in virtually all fields of study.	The General Test costs $45 per U.S. test-taker.		

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NATIONAL GOALS PANEL
INVENTORY OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES RELATING TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

PROJECT	1992-93 Budget/Tasks	1994-95 Budget/Tasks	1995-96 Budget/Tasks
EDUCATION ASSESSMENT SERIES Target: Freshmen and end-of-year sophomore students at colleges and universities across the United States. Purpose: To assess the communication and mathematics skills of college students using objective tests in English Composition and Mathematics, as well as an optional 45-minute essay. This is currently operating testing program used by colleges and universities in the U.S. It consists of three 45-minute assessments: (1) An English Composition test, which is an objective test containing 45 multiple choice questions that assess students' ability to display many of the skills needed for expository writing; (2) A Mathematics test of 45 multiple choice questions that assess students' ability in basic math and their comprehension of the mathematical skills and elementary concepts that are normally included in a college math course for non-math majors; and (3) An optional written essay.	$4.50 per locally-scored test booklet for orders of more than 1,000. Central scoring costs $2.50 per student. The essay grading costs $12 per essay. Item analysis costs $375 per institution for each test for each group of test-takers.		
TEST OF GENERAL INTELLECTUAL SKILLS OF THE NEW JERSEY COLLEGE OUTCOMES EVALUATION PROGRAM Target: Undergraduate students Purpose: To evaluate the intellectual/academic skills that college students develop through the common components of their undergraduate program. The Test of General Intellectual Skills is a performance-based assessment of students' critical thinking skills. The skills being evaluated include: analysis, problem-solving, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and written expression. The charge to the developers was that the test should resemble as closely as possible what students are required to	Under development.		

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INVENTORY OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES RELATING TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

PROJECT	1992-93 Budget/Tasks	1994-95 Budget/Tasks	1995-96 Budget/Tasks
do in the classroom and the world of work. The format used is that of an extended task. The tasks are those that faculty members believe college students should, and actually do, perform in the classroom to demonstrate the intellectual skills being taught. In spring 1990, the New Jersey Department of Higher Education used the tasks and supporting materials to begin an operational assessment program of general intellectual skills with New Jersey college sophomores.			

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